

at one dose, should have its weight in guiding our opinion, on such a case as the one under discussion; still, after placing every sentiment of deference in the scale, I cannot bring my mind to think that it ought to be put on record as a case of poisoning by two grains of arsenic, taken in divided doses for three or four days. I really think that future toxicologists, finding such a case on record, resting upon "*imperfect evidence*," as to the dose, and not without suspicion of other poisonous substances having been taken, would say that it weighs nothing. The detection of *traces* of arsenic in the viscera is certainly no absolute proof of the cause of death, considering the extreme delicacy of our tests; for it cannot be doubted that such traces might be found in the body of a patient taking arsenic medicinally, and dying accidentally. On the other hand, assuming that arsenic destroyed life, the bare possibility of the deceased woman having taken *more* of the poison than appeared in evidence (for she might have been taking it for weeks,) appears to me to destroy the value of the case, considered as a *fact* in toxicology, although I confess that the publication of such a case, notwithstanding all its doubtful points, ought to awaken the utmost vigilance, as well as quicken our zeal, in the pursuit of an inquiry so fraught with interest as the action of minute doses of arsenic on the human frame.

Allow me to add that I feel honoured by the impatience expressed by Dr. Castle for the conclusion of my inquiries, he may be assured there will be no unnecessary delay on my part. I still wait in the hope of further communications from members, from *hundreds* of whom I have as yet received no reply.

I am, Sir,

Your obedient servant,
THOMAS HUNT.

Herne Bay, July 26, 1848.

PETROLEUM IN ASIATIC CHOLERA.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE PROVINCIAL MEDICAL AND SURGICAL JOURNAL.

SIR,

At the present time, when many persons are anticipating with fearful anxiety the arrival of the cholera on our shores, any information which may throw light upon the true nature of the malady, or the introduction of any new agent which may possess remedial powers against it, deserves our attention. Petroleum, it appears, from the report of Dr. Andreyoski, has been found to possess very valuable properties as a remedy in this justly dreaded disease; and I find from a letter in the last number of the Journal, Dr. Tunstall, of Bath, brought it under the notice of Sir Charles Napier, two years since, with the same view. Our knowledge of the *modus operandi* of many medicinal agents is very limited and uncertain, but I always feel a greater degree of confidence in prescribing when I imagine I have something like a definite notion of the action of the medicine I am about to use. My object in making the foregoing remarks, is to call the attention of Dr. Turnstall to what appears to me an inconsistency in his views of the action of petroleum. He

says it has been demonstrated by Dr. John Davy and others, "*that the respired air of cholera patients contains a much smaller proportion of carbon than is sufficient for the proper purification of the blood;*" and then proceeds to say, "*Now, in the petroleum, we have a medicine that acts primarily as a powerful stimulant, secondarily by supplying the system with its due proportion of carbon for excretion; while its effects being produced by means of the absorbent system it acts beneficially as an anti-septic, preserving the frame from the rapidly fatal effects of this horrible disease by evolving carbonic acid from the lungs.*" I must confess that I cannot understand this secondary action, as explained by Dr. Tunstall. We are first told that the blood is not sufficiently purified of its carbon; and then we are recommended to use an agent which will supply the system with its due proportion of carbon for excretion, &c. Surely this is not scientific treatment. If the system is already overcharged with any element, we cannot expect to relieve it by administering more of the same, though I am aware that the doctrine of "*similia similibus curantur*" is professed to be held by some people.

I shall be glad to find that further experience confirms the value of petroleum as a remedy in cholera, anticipated by Dr. Tunstall; but if you think with me, that there is a little ambiguity in his idea of its mode of action, you will oblige me by inserting this letter in the Journal at your earliest convenience.

I have the honour to be,

Your obliged servant,
GEORGE SOULBY.

Dover, July 19, 1848.

INFLUENCE OF INSUFFICIENT FOOD ON THE GROWTH OF THE FETUS.

TO THE EDITOR OF THE PROVINCIAL MEDICAL AND SURGICAL JOURNAL.

SIR,

In the last number of the Journal you have inserted, (copied from the *Lancet*,) a case occurring to Dr. Frentruss, from which he infers that the *fœtus* may be *so reduced in size by starvation of the mother*, as to be born alive at the full period of gestation through a distorted pelvis; you will perhaps not consider the space misapplied in giving publicity to the following *controverting fact*.

M. R., reduced by the intemperance of herself and husband from easy circumstances to almost the lowest point of destitution, having barely sevenpence per diem for the support of the whole family, comprising herself, husband, and three young children, was delivered by me after a quick easy labour, in the month of August, 1843, of a *fine stout healthy boy*. She was then lying on the bare floor, covered only by a ragged quilt, in an apartment without one article of furniture, without the meanest necessities, and in one corner of which, were crouched her three, absolutely naked children. No improvement whatever occurred in her circumstances, for they were *too proud* to apply to the parish, and their habits seemed to have disgusted every friend,—even their relatives had no compassion for them. I was, therefore, much grieved to be again